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U.S. backing rebels in 4 countries

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WASHINGTON — A year after quietly adopting a policy of support for anti-Communist insurgencies worldwide, President Reagan has embraced the causes of four rebel movements from Afghanistan to Nicaragua in a new strategy to loosen Soviet influence in the Third World.

Under the Reagan Doctrine, as the policy is generically known, U.S.-backed rebel armies are fighting Soviet-backed regimes in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and Nicaragua. Reagan's rebels include 150,000 Afghan *mujahadeen*, 25,000 Angolan *guerrilheiros*, 20,000 Cambodian *maquisards* and 15,000 Nicaraguan *contras*.

The number of guerrillas supported — about 210,000 — is the largest in U.S. history and the first to be assisted since the Central Intelligence Agency trained 80,000 Laotian and Vietnamese rebels during the Vietnam War.

As in the past, the CIA again is playing a central role. To implement the Reagan Doctrine, the spy agency is undertaking new covert operations at a budgeted cost of about half a billion dollars, according to administration officials briefed on the CIA programs.

They said that the immediate goal is to erode Soviet interests in the Third World, but that the ultimate objective is to deal a strategic blow against Moscow without using atomic weapons.

The strategy, recommended by CIA Director William Casey and approved by President Reagan in January 1985, rests on the premise that the superpowers are already engaged in a World War III of sorts involving proxy armies, the officials said.

From that perspective, the United States is trying to roll back Moscow's gains by aiding pro-Western rebels in those nations.

"The way to hurt Moscow is through the colonies, not in a frontal war which could end the world," said one official, quoting from briefings at which Casey's views have been outlined.

He said Casey believes the United States is justified in aiding foreign rebels because the

Russians fired the first shot back in the 1960s when then-Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev pledged to aid Third World "wars of national liberation."

The CIA declined comment. But when queried on the subject, it released a copy of a little-publicized May 1, 1985, Casey speech to the Metropolitan Club of New York.

Casey then accused the Soviet Union and its partners of waging a "subversive war ... against the United States and its interests around the world for a quarter of a century or more."

"This campaign of aggressive subversion has nibbled away at friendly governments and our vital interests until today our national security is impaired in our immediate neighborhood as well as in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America."

Primary targets

Casey noted that Moscow's backing of leftist rebels occurred at strategic locations aimed at three primary targets vital to U.S. security: Middle East oil fields, the Panama Canal and Mexico.

As a result, U.S. officials said, the CIA has become a virtual "freedom fighters" bureau and Casey a veritable vicar of the Reagan Doctrine of exporting anti-Soviet revolution.

The policy had its genesis in Reagan's decision six weeks after taking office Jan. 20, 1981, to sign a secret finding, or report, to the congressional intelligence committees authorizing the CIA to spend \$19.5 million to organize the first contingent of Nicaraguan *contra* rebels.

At that time Reagan also increased from \$100 million to \$250 million the annual CIA funding for *mujahadeen* rebels.

But the Afghan and Nicaraguan programs were uncoordinated.

The idea of a comprehensive policy can be traced to anti-Communist adventurer Jack Wheeler, known as the Indiana Jones of the right, who last year helped the pro-Reagan Citizens for America lobbying group organize the first summit of anti-Soviet insurgents in rebel-held Angolan territory.

Wheeler says he got the idea during a tour of battlefields in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and Nicaragua in 1983. Returning to the United States, Wheeler briefed Casey, Secretary of State

George Shultz, then-United Nations Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick and Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North of the National Security Council, who today serves as the chief White House contact with the *contras*.

"Now it's our turn," Wheeler told a reporter in January during a gala dinner at the Washington Hilton hotel honoring visiting Angolan rebel chief Jonas Savimbi.

"In the 1960s, we had this endless succession of Marxist guerrilla heroes: Mao Tse Tung, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara; all the Che posters on all the college dorm walls in the 1960s. Now there are anti-Marxist guerrilla heroes."

Dreams made policy

In late 1984, the White House translated Wheeler's dreams into policy.

According to officials, the secret Restricted Inter-Agency Policy Group, made up of NSC, CIA, Pentagon and State Department representatives and known as the 208 Committee because it meets in room 208 of the Old Executive Office Building, met and recommended a coordinated policy of supplying lethal and "humanitarian" aid to four insurgencies.

They are:

- The Islamic Unity of Afghan *Mujahadeen* made up of seven rebel factions in Afghanistan.

- The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, led by Savimbi.

- A coalition of Cambodian rebel groups led by Prince Norodom Sihanouk that also includes Pol Pot's murderous Khmer Rouge. U.S. officials say, however, that no American money reaches the Khmer Rouge.

- The United Nicaraguan Opposition headed by Adolfo Calero, Arturo Cruz and Alfonso Robelo.

In early 1985, Reagan endorsed the committee's proposal.

Shortly after, Congress handed Reagan a major victory that greatly advanced his freedom fighters' program, lifting a 1975 ban on aid to the Angolan rebels. Congress also approved assistance to the Cambodians.

The only glitch was that Congress refused to renew military aid to the Nicaraguans, approving instead \$30.1 million in nonlethal assistance, communications gear and CIA aid to finance *contra* expenses and projects.

This year, the 208 Committee upgraded the Reagan Doctrine by escalating CIA operations in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and Nicaragua.

According to congressional sources with access to classified data, Reagan approved committee proposals to provide sophisticated portable anti-aircraft Stinger missiles to the Afghan, Angolan and Nicaraguan insurgents; comprehensive war plans to the Nicaraguans and encrypted radios and logistical aid to the Cambodians.

The sources said Reagan signed secret findings in early 1986

authorizing the CIA and other agencies to administer \$523 million in new assistance to the four insurgencies.

According to the sources, the breakdown includes:

- \$400 million in military and humanitarian aid to the Afghan *mujahadeen*, including 150 Stingers.

- \$100 million in military and logistical assistance to the Nicaraguan *contras*, including 50 Stingers.

- \$15 million in military and nonlethal aid to Savimbi's UNITA in Angola, along with 50 Stingers.

- \$8 million in nonlethal aid to the Cambodians, including uniforms, medical supplies, food, communications equipment and intelligence data.

Plagued by problems

Only the Angolan and Cambodian programs are proceeding smoothly. The Afghan and Nicaraguan operations have been plagued by logistical and political problems.

CIA officers delivered the first 12 Stingers to Afghan guerrillas in April. But Andrew Elva of the Federation for American-Afghan Action, a Washington group that lobbies for *mujahadeen* aid, said 11 Stingers fired by the rebels at Soviet aircraft missed because of "training mismanagement."

As for the Nicaraguans, the Stingers intended for them were never delivered because of the continued resistance in Congress to approve their aid program. The administration has since decided not to supply Stingers to the *contras*.

Dissension within the administration also has been reported.

In a Feb. 24 letter to Reagan, CIA deputy director John McMahon resigned, citing "personal reasons." However, intelligence sources said McMahon quit to protest the 208 Committee's recommendation for stepped-up covert actions on behalf of the foreign rebels. McMahon has denied that assertion.

Reagan Doctrine Beneficiaries

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